

## Rufous-chinned Laughingthrush *Garrulax rufogularis*: a new species for China

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On 11 March 1999 ND, PT, J. Hornskov and D. Johnson were birding in subtropical hill forest near Ruili, in extreme south-west Yunnan province, China. DJ was in the lower reaches of a ravine, while the other three of us were together near the head of the ravine around a large complex of mature bamboo and dense waist-high ground flora. Several Red-billed Scimitar Babblers *Pomatorhinus ochraceiceps*, at least two Red-faced Liocichlas *Liocichla phoenicea*, several Grey-throated Babblers *Stachyris nigriceps* and a White-gorgeted Flycatcher *Ficedula monileger* had all been showing intermittently when a single laughingthrush-sized bird emerged from a low, thick tangle of bamboo and flew up to perch briefly on a side branch of a tree some 20 m up the slope from ND. After a short time, perhaps only 20 seconds or so, the bird dived leftwards across the slope and disappeared into dense cover; subsequent prolonged searching failed to relocate it. Both ND and PT, from different positions, had binocular views of the bird at rest: the back, wings and breast were obscured from ND, while the head and foreparts were obscured from PT. Unfortunately it was not initially in view to JH and he got only a naked-eyed glimpse when it flew off. The following is a composite description from the notes of ND and PT.

Head and neck appeared largely blackish, with prominent tawny-buff loreal patch curving upwards in front of eye; pale rufous chin and whitish throat. Typically strong laughingthrush bill appeared dark. Underside of longish graduated tail appeared very dark, but with rufous tips to feathers; undertail coverts and rear ventral area rich tawny-rufous. Wings and lower back plain mid-brown with pale edges to tips of flight feathers. Rear flanks pale buff with bold black crescentic bars.

Despite the brief views ND and PT had no hesitation in identifying the bird as a Rufous-chinned Laughingthrush *Garrulax rufogularis*, a species with which they both had previous experience, ND as recently as December 1998 at Cherrapunjee, Meghalaya, India. There are seven recognised races of *Garrulax rufogularis*, ranging from Pakistan and the western Himalayas to the hill states of north-east India and northern Myanmar, and north Vietnam, but our sighting is the first record for China. Western Yunnan is adjacent to Kachin state in northern Myanmar where *G. r. rufiberbis* has been recorded previously in Myitkyina district (as well as in Nagaland, India); the city of Myitkyina is about 150 km almost due north of Ruili.

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## Streak-breasted Woodpecker *Picus viridanus* in Bangladesh: re-identification of the region's sole specimen recorded as Laced Woodpecker *P. vittatus*

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The Laced Woodpecker *Picus vittatus* and the Streak-breasted Woodpecker *Picus viridanus* are largely allopatric, but locally occur in the same area, where they occupy different habitats (Deignan 1955). Although Deignan considered them conspecific, arguing that habitat partitioning does not constitute true sympatry, most recent works accept them as separate species. Both taxa show considerable variation, leading to much confusion in the literature, and resulting in the erroneous assumption of widespread sympatry (Kloss 1926). A

third very similar species, the Streak-breasted Woodpecker *Picus xanthopygaeus*, occurs through much of the Indian subcontinent, and overlaps in range with the other two. Were it not for these zones of sympatry, these three species would surely be considered conspecific. Although the races in the area of sympatry (*P. v. viridanus* and *P. vittatus connectans*, *sensu* Deignan 1961) are not as distinct from one another as are some others, neither do they appear to intergrade, and in the southern Malay Peninsula (*P. viridanus weberi* and *P. v.*

*vittatus*), the races of each that essentially replace each other geographically differ greatly. While it is accepted here that they are separate species, this is not very well established and has been disputed (Goodwin 1968, Short 1982), and further study is needed in the areas of presumed sympatry.

On 12 April 1958, R. A. Paynter, Jr collected a single adult female woodpecker (MCZ no. 298094) of this group at Burigoalni, about 30 miles south of Khulna, in the Sundarbans of Bangladesh. It clearly was not *xanthopygaeus*, until then the only species recorded from the Indian subcontinent. Paynter (1970) tentatively identified the specimen as *Picus vittatus*, closest to the race *eisenhoferi*, but probably of a new race, and rejected it as a member of the *viridanus* group because it lacks obvious streaking on the throat and breast. On this basis, *P. vittatus* has been included as a member of the avifauna of the Indian subcontinent (Harvey 1990 and more recent works).

However, I find the Bangladesh specimen inseparable from several specimens of nominate *viridanus* from Myanmar, while differing in a number of characters from all races of *vittatus*. Additionally, no race of *vittatus* approaches the Indian subcontinent more closely than about Bangkok (Boonsong and Round 1991, contra Paynter 1970), while *viridanus* occurs through southern Myanmar, and west into Arakan, which is adjacent to Bangladesh. Study of extensive series of all races at the USNM and BMNH collection (see Acknowledgements) has confirmed that the Bangladesh bird is indeed *viridanus*, and thus it is necessary to replace *vittatus* with *viridanus* on regional lists (at least when *viridanus* is given species status). Given the sedentariness of tropical woodpeckers, the difficulty of identification, and the paucity of fieldwork in the area, *viridanus* is probably more than a straggler to southern Bangladesh, and indeed the specimen label states that it had enlarged ovaries, almost certainly indicating it was in breeding condition. Although the possibility that the Bangladesh bird represents a new race of *vittatus* had been suggested (Paynter 1970), it seems indistinguishable from some southern Myanmar specimens of nominate *viridanus* Blyth 1843, described from Arakan. As the essentially plain throat and breast is common among these north-western populations of *viridanus*, which are the most distant from any area of possible intergradation, the possibility of character displacement should be considered.

The identification of *viridanus* and *vittatus* is complicated by geographic variation, and is not well presented in the literature. To facilitate future field identification of the races of these two species in the limited area of approach and overlap (the northern Malayan Peninsula), characters typical of nearly all adults of each are presented here. Compared to *vittatus*, *viridanus* usually has the lower mandible, including its base and near the tip, brighter and more extensively yellow; the narial bristles are fuller, the lores are more strikingly pale, with less black speckling, and are bordered above by a larger amount of black in front of

the eye; it has a larger black moustache with more white streaking; its auriculars are darker and more uniform grey, contrasting less with the duller, darker sides of the neck, but set off more strongly by whitish stripes both above and below; and the cap of adult male *viridanus* is slightly fuller and redder. The mantle of *viridanus* is darker and less yellow-tinged; its entire upperparts are more monochromatic except for the remiges, with the wings concolorous with the mantle (duller or bronzier in *vittatus*); the tertials (and less often the mantle and uppertail coverts) often show clear, fine light barring visible from above (lacking or vaguer and broader in *vittatus*); the rump is less yellow, while the uppertail coverts are yellower and contrast more with the tail. The primary coverts are distinctly and narrowly barred with white (vague and buffy in *vittatus*); and the rectrices usually have distinct buffy barring on the upper half of the central pair (no or vague barring in *vittatus*). The throat of *viridanus* may be clearly streaked or have only fine whitish striations, and similarly the breast, which usually has at least weak striations, may appear unmarked brownish olive (throat and breast unmarked and yellower in *vittatus*); and the underparts of *viridanus* look darker and more streaked, as most feathers have a strong dark shaft-streak narrowly bordered white, then a broad dark border, then a narrow pale outer border, and finally distinct dark edges in fresh plumage (a single, narrower dark ellipse within each feather in *vittatus*). Juveniles were not closely studied, but they clearly present additional identification challenges, as they usually have much less prominent markings below, and both species are subject to staining and extremely worn, faded plumage.

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